**Ashfield Community Action Network**

**Annual General Meeting**

**November 13, 2023**

**President’s Report**

Emerging from Covid and reenergizing AshfieldCAN has not been without its challenges. This said, the Network has maintained momentum in improving the lives of our community, and more broadly the good people of Bassendean.

In this past year, of particular note has been the continued development of the Lookout Park, within Bassendean but bounded by Ashfield. In this our local MLA Dave Kelly has been instrumental, as has been the support of the Town of Bassendean.

The departure of Peta Mabbs as CEO of the Town and the arrival of the new CEO has required adaptation to a new, more formal manangemt style, and we look forward to strengthening this relationship. I believe the CEOs now better understands AshfieldCAN as an organisation, formed to assist, not hinder, the Town with responding to the unique issues facing the ratepayers of Ashfield.

In respect to the lookout park, we continue to engage with the DBCA, in having their officers understand the damage they have caused by the inappropriate planting of an overly dense eucalypt tree grove at the base of the Lookout Park escarpment, and the dense screening trees planted at the top edge of the escarpment. It is not only the Park that has been damaged but also Ashfield residents. Some of our people, many years ago, paid a premium and built family homes on rehabilitated land that also enjoyed a views to the East. It is fair to say some of these homeowners are grief stricken, and feel powerless, that an action of Government has taken away their amenity and greatly depreciated the value of their homes. They feel that to complain, is to be labeled as anti-environment.

This deliberate destruction of the Park’s ‘outlook’ aspect took place after extensive consultation and site meetings with the (then) WAPC. They marveled at the visual connection with the Ashfield Flats wetland, the river valley, and Darling Ranges beyond. Their enthusiasm and partnership motivated the development of the park, built from a century old, contaminated site. It is perhaps damning that it was only following the autocratic but failed attempt to exclude the community from the river, and the removal of a hastily erected dividing and divisive fence, that these ‘public’ planting works were undertaken.

As an aside, in preparation for the park’s future, AshfieldCAN purchased a free-to-use ‘Public Viewing’ binocular, at significant cost. Installation had begun but is now held in abeyance, as the need for it will soon become redundant.

We will now watch very closely the development of the Ashfield Flats Master Plan, as there are crucial elements of it that are an obvious ‘Cut and Paste’ of the plan resoundingly rejected by the community several years ago. The good and well-meaning people of DBCA and their consultants may not fully understand the cultural and emotional connection the Bassendean and Ashfield community hold with this unique stretch of river.

The dense eucalypt planting was also the subject of correspondence to the state minister responsible for the Wetlands and the Commissioner of FESA, pointing out the catastrophic effect on public safety should a fire take hold in or adjacent to the eucalypt grove. The grove will prevent firefighting units moving south to protect homes along the ‘Fire Access’ track, constructed following a life-threatening fire in 2015.

In these matters, AshfieldCAN will continue to engage courteously but robustly with our local and State Government stakeholders during the coming year.

On a more positive note, we continue to engage with our community through various events. We hold regular ‘Weed and Feed’ events maintaining our parks and to facilitate this, members have received accreditation training in garden community garden maintenance, facilitated by the Town.

We also host regular and free community events in the Gary Blanch Reserve (an AshfieldCAN Project) and look forward to the forthcoming Christmas in the Park.

The ‘Dog’s Breakfast’ recently held at Sandy Beach Reserve, and supported by the Town and the SES, was an outstanding success. Thanks to our beautiful Dogs and their owners, and the many sponsors who support us.

AshfieldCAN has been at the forefront in community safety, with members installing their own security camera systems (at some expense) and joining with the WA Police, providing them access to footage under their CCTV community program. This has resulted in the rapid apprehension of criminals, preventing them from committing further destructive crimes. We encourage other members to consider installing systems, and to also take advantage of the Town’s CCTV rebate program.

In conclusion, whilst we have a healthy membership, many members are passive. In this coming year we will explore how best to encourage more active participation, particularly among newer and younger members of the community. We envisage that the Ashfield Sports Club and its facilities will form a hub in this. Exactly how is yet to be determined but a draft plan has been formed and will be for future discussion.

All the very best to you and your family, friends, and loved ones, hoping you enjoy a happy, safe, prosperous, and healthy new year. And in this we also spare a thought for those who, sadly, have left us, and their families.

Robert (Bob) Brown

President and on Behalf of the Committee

Ashfield Community Action Network inc

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